

# Multilingual Certification Program

## About the Program

In 1988, in response to the increasing immigrant population speaking languages other than English, Montgomery County Government started the Multilingual Certification Program. This program compensates merit County employees who use a language other than English in their work to provide services to customers or clients in a language other than English. In 2009, the Montgomery County Multilingual Certification Program has 656 employees certified in 35 languages.

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## Expectations for Employees in the Multilingual Certification Program

- An employee in the Multilingual Certification Program is expected to provide language assistance in interpretation (Basic and Advanced Language Certified) and translation (Advanced Language Certified employees only) to his/her department and to other departments' programs, as needed.
- If an employee in the Multilingual Certification Program is contacted to do interpretations (Basic and Advanced Language Certified) or translations (Advanced Language Certified employees only) from someone outside of their department, the employee must:
  - make a reasonable effort to provide the interpretation and translation services;
  - obtain approval from his/her supervisor before accepting an assignment from another department; and
  - respond to requests by email or telephone for language interpretation and translation services within 24 hours, whether or not they are available.

### **Advanced Level Language Certified Employees:**

- Those employees certified at the Advanced level are also expected to assist OHR in the certification process by acting as a Multilingual Certification Program Test Administrators/Raters, on an as needed basis. OHR offers a Test Administrator/Rater training program to assist employees certified at the advanced language level in the following five languages: Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

## Tips for interpreters

By Marjory Bancroft, Cross Cultural Communications

If you are a bilingual employee who interprets, you are doing vital work. A few simple habits make everything go more smoothly. Here is a reminder.

1. Honor the Golden Rule! *Interpret everything that is said, exactly as it is said. Add nothing. Omit nothing. Change nothing.*
2. Perform a professional introduction.
3. Let the provider and client speak to each other—not you.
4. Find a position in the background.
5. Avoid side conversations.
6. Never do your job while interpreting.
7. Prepare for the assignment (if possible).
8. Interrupt rarely.
9. If you interrupt, always interpret what you say to the other person.
10. Use first person. (Instead of saying, "She said she needs some information about housing," say, "I need a place to live.")

Your interpreter introduction should be simple. At a minimum, after your name you could say, "I wanted to let you know that everything that is said will be interpreted, and it will be kept confidential. Please speak directly to each other. Also, please use short sentences and pause after two or three sentences so I can interpret". (Keep those intros short!)

And remember: using first person is up to 50 percent faster! It is also more accurate, and builds a better relationship between provider and client.

Finally, remember to take a break after two hours. Accuracy goes down the longer you interpret.

## Training for Interpreters

Community Interpreter Training will be offered to all employees in the Multilingual Certification Program on January 6, 2010; April 16, 2010; and June 8, 2010. Prior supervisory approval is required. To register using the **web training registration and management system, go to the link:** <https://int01.mcgov.org/ent/sl/ohr/> and login using your **county username** and **password**. Employees may also register by calling the Automated Training Registration Line on (240) 777- 5122.

For additional Information contact Dr. Cristina Kirkbride at [cristina.kirkbride@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:cristina.kirkbride@montgomerycountymd.gov) or 240-777-5157.